

Amendments to the Claims

1 - 11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently amended) A method of assembling an engine block mold comprising a barrel slab core and a cylinder bore liner; wherein the barrel slab core includes a slab portion and a barrel portion extending from the slab portion, the barrel portion being adapted to receive the cylinder liner; wherein the barrel portion has an outer diameter taper along at least a portion of its length and the liner has a substantially matching internal diameter taper along at least a portion of its length; wherein:

said method comprises the steps disposing the cylinder liner on the barrel portion, and inserting the slab barrel core and the liner disposed thereon into a mold casing;

said method further comprises the step of preparing the cylinder liner;

said step of preparing the cylinder liner includes cleaning and preheating the cylinder liner; and

said cleaning and heating of the cylinder liner is achieved simultaneously using a fluidized sand bed.

13. (Currently amended) The ~~engine block mold as~~ method set forth in claim 12, wherein the taper of the cylinder liner and the taper of the barrel portion extends along substantially the entire length of each.

14. (Currently amended) The ~~engine block mold as~~ method set forth in claim 12, wherein the barrel core is integral with a crankcase core.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently amended) A method as set forth in claim ~~45~~ 12, wherein the disposing step and/or the inserting step is accomplished via manipulation means.

17. (Previously presented) A method as set forth in claim 16, wherein the manipulation means are robots.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently amended) A method of casting an engine block ~~with the engine block mold set forth in claim 12, said method~~ comprising the steps of:
assembling ~~the~~ an engine block mold according to the method of claim 12;
pouring molten metal into the mold to cast an engine block; and
removing the cast engine block from the mold.

22. (Previously presented) A method as set forth in claim 21, further comprising the steps of machining the cylinder liners so that they have a substantially constant internal diameter along their length.

23. (Currently amended) A method of making an engine block mold ~~as set forth in claim 12~~, comprising a plurality of the barrel slab cores and a corresponding plurality of the cylinder bore liners; wherein the barrel portion of each barrel slab core is adapted to receive the corresponding cylinder liner; wherein each barrel portion has an outer diameter taper along at least a portion of its length and each corresponding cylinder liner has a substantially matching internal diameter taper along at least a portion of its length; wherein:

said method comprises the steps disposing each of the plurality of cylinder liners on the corresponding barrel portion, and inserting the slab barrel cores and the liners disposed thereon into a mold casing;

said method further comprises the step of preparing the cylinder liners;

the step of preparing the cylinder liners includes cleaning and preheating the cylinder liners; and

the cleaning and heating of the cylinder liners is achieved simultaneously using a fluidized sand bed.

24. (Currently amended) A method ~~The engine block mold~~ as set forth in claim 23, wherein the taper of each barrel portion extends along substantially its entire length and wherein the taper of the corresponding cylinder liner extends substantially its entire length.

25. (Currently amended) A method ~~The engine block mold~~ as set forth in claim 23, wherein the plurality of barrel cores are integral with a crankcase core.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently amended) A method as set forth in claim ~~26~~ 23, wherein the disposing step and/or the inserting step is accomplished via robots.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Currently Amended) A method of casting an engine block ~~with the engine block mold set forth in claim 23, said method~~ comprising the steps of:
assembling the engine block mold according to the method set forth in claim 23;
pouring molten metal into the mold to cast an engine block; and
removing the cast engine block from the mold.

32. (Previously presented) A method as set forth in claim 31, further comprising the steps of machining the cylinder liners so that they have a substantially constant internal diameter along their length.

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